

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please rewrite the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a bowl of thermostructural composite material formed by fiber reinforcement densified by a matrix, the method comprising making a preform constituting the fiber reinforcement by draping two-dimensional fiber plies on a former of a shape corresponding to the shape of the bowl to be made, and densifying the preform with a material constituting the matrix of the composite material,
the method being characterized by further comprising:
using deformable two-dimensional fiber plies,
superposing said plies on the former,
deforming the plies so that the plies fit closely on said
former by deforming without forming folds, and
bonding the superposed plies to one another by means of
fibers extending transversely relative to the plies so as to
obtain a one-piece bowl preform which is subsequently densified.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that plies are used made of a fabric formed of a plurality of

Application No. 09/889,862
FILED: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

unidirectional sheets superposed in different directions and bonded together so as to form deformable individual mesh loops.

3. (Original) A method according to claim 2, characterized in that plies are used made of a fabric formed of two unidirectional sheets superposed with directions that are at an angle of 45° to 60° between each other.

4. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 2, characterized in that the unidirectional sheets are bonded to one another by knitting a thread which passes from one side of the fabric to the other.

5. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 2, characterized in that the unidirectional sheets are bonded together by needling.

6. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 2, characterized in that the unidirectional sheets are bonded together by stitching with a thread that passes from one side of the fabric to the other.

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

7. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 2, characterized in that the plies are superposed by being mutually angularly offset around an axis passing through the bottom of the bowl.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that deformable fiber plies are used that are formed by knitting.

9. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that plies are used formed of carbon fiber yarns that are free of surface functions.

10. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that plies are used formed of carbon fiber yarns provided with an interphase coating of pyrolytic carbon.

11. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the superposed plies are bonded together by needling so as to transfer fibers taken from the plies transversely thereto.

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

12. (Original) A method according to claim 11, characterized in that each newly draped ply is needled onto the underlying structure.

13. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 11, characterized in that the density of fibers transferred transversely relative to the plies is controlled throughout the thickness of the preform.

14. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the superposed plies are bonded together by stitching.

15. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the superposed plies are bonded together by implanting threads transversely relative to the plies.

16. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the preform is consolidated prior to densification.

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

17. (Original) A method according to claim 16, characterized in that the preform is consolidated by being impregnated with a resin, by polymerizing the resin, and by carbonizing the polymerized resin.

18. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that, prior to densification, the preform is subjected to heat treatment for dimensional stabilization and for purification at a temperature lying in the range 1600°C to 2800°C.

b
19. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the preform is densified by chemical vapor infiltration.

20. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the deformable two-dimensional fiber plies used are whole, being free from any cutouts or slots, thereby obtaining a preform for a complete bowl in one piece, and densification is performed on the complete bowl preform.

21. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the deformable two-dimensional fiber plies

Application No. 09/089,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

used are whole, being free from cutouts or slots, so as to obtain a complete one-piece bowl preform, a hole is made through the bottom of the preform prior to densification of the preform by chemical vapor infiltration, and the hole is subsequently closed by a plug.

22. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the deformable two-dimensional fiber plies used are whole, having a substantially central opening, the plies are superposed on the former so that their openings are in alignment, thereby obtaining a bowl preform with a hole through the bottom of the preform constituted by the aligned openings in the plies, the preform is densified by chemical vapor infiltration, and the hole is subsequently closed by a plug.

23. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 21, characterized in that a plug of thermostructural composite material is used.

24. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 21, characterized in that an additional step of chemical vapor

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

infiltration is performed after the plug has been put into place in the hole formed in the bottom of the preform.

25. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that after densification, purification heat treatment is performed at a temperature lying in the range 1600°C to 2700°C.

B
26. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that after densification, a coating of pyrolytic carbon is formed on the bowl.

27. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 1, characterized in that after densification, a coating of silicon carbide is formed on the bowl.

28. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 21, characterized in that the inside face of the bowl is lined with a protective coating.

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

29. (Original) A method according to claim 28, characterized in that a protective coating is used made of a thermostructural composite material.

30.-40. (Withdrawn)

41. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 3, characterized in that the unidirectional sheets are bonded to one another by knitting a thread which passes from one side of the fabric to the other.

b
42. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 3, characterized in that the unidirectional sheets are bonded together by needling.

43. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 3, characterized in that the unidirectional sheets are bonded together by stitching with a thread that passes from one side of the fabric to the other.

44. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 12, characterized in that the density of fibers transferred

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

transversely relative to the plies is controlled throughout the thickness of the preform.

45. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 22, characterized in that a plug of thermostructural composite material is used.

46.-47. (Withdrawn)

48. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 3, characterized in that:

the unidirectional sheets are bonded to one another by one of knitting a thread which passes from one side of the fabric to the other, by needling, or by stitching with a thread that passes from one side of the fabric to the other; and

the plies are superposed by being mutually angularly offset around an axis passing through the bottom of the bowl.

49. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 48, characterized in that the superposed plies are bonded together by needling so as to either transfer fibers taken from the plies

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

transversely thereto or with each newly draped ply needled onto the underlying structure; and

the density of fibers transferred transversely relative to the plies is controlled throughout the thickness of the preform.

50. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 48, characterized in that:

the preform is consolidated prior to densification;

the preform is consolidated by being impregnated with a resin, by polymerizing the resin, and by carbonizing the polymerized resin;

prior to densification, the preform is subjected to heat treatment for dimensional stabilization and for purification at a temperature lying in the range 1600°C to 2800°C;

the preform is densified by chemical vapor infiltration; and the deformable two-dimensional fiber plies used are whole, being free from any cutouts or slots, thereby obtaining a preform for a complete bowl in one piece, and densification is performed on the complete bowl preform.

51. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 50, characterized in that either—the deformable two-dimensional fiber

Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

plies used are whole, being free from cutouts or slots, so as to obtain a complete one-piece bowl preform, a hole is made through the bottom of the preform prior to densification of the preform by chemical vapor infiltration, and the hole is subsequently closed by a plug.

52. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 50, characterized in that the deformable two-dimensional fiber plies used are whole, having a substantially central opening, the plies are superposed on the former so that their openings are in alignment, thereby obtaining a bowl preform with a hole through the bottom of the preform constituted by the aligned openings in the plies, the preform is densified by chemical vapor infiltration, and the hole is subsequently closed by a plug; a plug of thermostructural composite material is used; an additional step of chemical vapor infiltration is performed after the plug has been put into place in the hole formed in the bottom of the preform; after densification, purification heat treatment is performed at a temperature lying in the range 1600°C to 2700°C; after densification, a coating of pyrolytic carbon or silicon carbide is formed on the bowl;

-13-

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Application No. 09/889,862
Filed: July 23, 2001
Group Art Unit: 1733

the inside face of the bowl is lined with a protective coating; and

a protective coating is used made of a thermostructural composite material.

53.-54. (Withdrawn)

55. (New) A method according to claim 1, wherein the shape of the bowl is suitable for receiving a crucible for drawing of ingots of metal.